

**Liberal Studies**

**Report on P6 (World Cultures) Assessment**

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## **I. Introduction**

This report evaluates teaching and assessment practices in World Cultures (P6) as part of the ongoing review of the Liberal Studies Program (LSP). Our assessment is based on the required assessment components outlined in the LSP document (AY 2007-2008).

### **A. Goals for this Report**

1. Determine whether P6 learning objectives are being met by the program and instructors.
2. Evaluate current learning objectives and revamp as necessary to meet the goals of the program.
3. Identify strengths and limitations of the program, and offer specific recommendations for program goals, teaching, and assessment.

**Liberal Studies Assessment 2007-2008**  
**P6-World Cultures**

Syllabi Review

Fifteen syllabi for classes in the P6 (World Cultures) category were submitted. Two additional syllabi were mistakenly included for consideration by the committee (PAR 306 and PHYS 105), so they were not included in our results. These syllabi represent only about one half of the courses offered in this category.

This is the distribution of syllabi that either addressed Liberal Studies, Perspectives, or World Cultures (P6) objectives:

Overarching Learning Goals of the Liberal Studies Program:

LG #1: 10/15  
LG #2: 10/15  
LG #3: 10/15  
LG #4: 10/15  
LG #5: 10/15

Primary Goals for All Perspectives Courses:

LG #1: 6/15  
LG #2: 5/15  
LG #3: 6/15  
LG #4: 6/15  
LG #5: 6/15  
LG #6: 6/15  
LG #7: 6/15

(P6) World Cultures

LG #1: 10/15  
LG #2: 10/15  
LG #3: 10/15  
LG #4: 10/15

Review of Student Work

Overarching Learning Goals of the Liberal Studies Program:

Learning Goal	# of student products reflecting each level of mastery as described above	
	Level	#
Demonstrate the ability to locate, analyze, and evaluate information	1	6
	2	9
	3	9
Demonstrate the ability to synthesize information	1	4
	2	5
	3	6
Demonstrate the ability to interpret and use numerical, written, oral and visual data	1	1
	2	1
	3	1
Demonstrate the ability to read with comprehension, and to write and speak clearly, coherently, and effectively as well as to adapt modes of com. appropriate to an audience	1	1
	2	1
	3	1
Demonstrate the ability to critically analyze arguments	1	5
	2	8
	3	8
Demonstrate the ability to recognize behaviors and define choices that affect lifelong well-being	1	5
	2	6
	3	7

Primary Goals for All Perspectives Courses

Learning Goal	Level	# of student products reflecting ea
To promote love of learning and to cultivate an active interest in the Liberal Studies	1	4
	2	4
	3	4
To build on the Cores' foundation through practice and refinement of areas academic emphasis	1	2
	2	3
	3	4
To provide students with a broadened world view and knowledge base	1	5
	2	7
	3	6
To provide experiences in the arts, humanities, and social sciences from which connections between disciplines can be revealed	1	2
	2	2
	3	2
To provide an introduction to the challenges of living in a global society	1	4
	2	4
	3	4
To create opportunities for reflection on values, and for discussing differences in values in a critical yet tolerate manner.	1	6
	2	6
	3	9
To afford opportunities to make career or disciplinary choices	1	0
	2	0
	3	0

(P6) World Cultures

Learning Objective	Level	# of student products reflecting each level
Students will study significant cultural issues in a global and multi-disciplinary setting, which may include the consideration of ethnicity, gender, religion, or race.	1 2 3	7 5 6
Students will analyze the nature of cultural diversity and global interdependence and the challenges of solving problems and reaching understanding across national and cultural divides.	1 2 3	5 5 5
Students will be actively engaged in the synthesis of information from a variety of disciplines.	1 2 3	3 5 4
Students will understand the responsibility of educated people to be informed about current public issues.	1 2 3	3 3 3

## Review of Faculty Surveys

For the purpose of assessing instructive practices, P6 faculty were asked to fill out an anonymous survey about their teaching and assessment methods in both semesters of the 2007-2008 academic year (see Attachment 1 for a copy of the survey). Thirteen faculty completed the survey, accounting for roughly 16 sections offered during the academic year.

Overall, faculty responses to the survey indicate that the day-to-day teaching and assessment methods in P6 courses meet Liberal Studies Program (LSP) learning objectives.

### I. Results of Faculty Survey Data

#### a. Faculty Survey Respondent Description

- i. The majority of respondents (77%, n=10) taught one P6 course per semester, with two faculty teaching two (15%), one reporting three courses taught (8%), and none teaching four or more.

#### b. Academic Rank or Title

- i. Nearly 40% of respondents are tenured or tenure track faculty, most of who are Associate Professors (23%, n=3) and Professors (15%, n=2), with no Assistant professors responding.
- ii. Similarly, nearly 40% of respondents are fixed-term lecturers (80% faculty) (23%, n=3) or full-time visiting faculty (15%, n=3).
- iii. Part-time adjunct faculty represent the remaining 23% (n=3) of respondents.

#### c. Teaching Methods

##### i. Format

1. All respondents (n=13) indicate that courses were taught in a traditional, face-to-face format.

##### ii. Method of Delivery

1. All respondents lecture at least weekly, with the vast majority doing so each class meeting (92%, n=12)

2. A great majority of respondents (85%, n=11) include class discussions during each meeting, with an equal number of reporting doing so at least weekly (8%, n=1) or monthly (85, n=1).
3. Fewer respondents utilize regularly small group activities, with over half (54%, n=7) acknowledging never doing so, and only 15% (n=2) reporting activities during each class meeting, 8% (n=1) each week, and 23% (n=3) monthly.
4. Results for class activities indicate that few respondents (15%, n=2) do so each class meeting or weekly (15%, n=2), with most (46%, n=6) reporting monthly activities, and nearly one fourth (23%, n=3) never doing so.
5. Laboratory and/or hands-on learning are by far the least reported teaching methods identified by respondents, with a great majority (85%, n=11) of respondents never using them, 8% (n=1) monthly, 8% (n=1) weekly, and none each class period.
6. The final teaching method of debate is reported being used each class period by 31% (n=4) of respondents, by 23% (n=3) weekly, by 8% (n=1), and never by 38% (n=5).

d. P6 World Cultures Learning Goals Assessment

- i. P6 Goal 1: Study significant contemporary issues in a global and multidisciplinary setting, which may include consideration of ethnicity, gender, religion, or race.

1. 92% (n=12) report this goal is being formally assessed, and 15% (n=2) are informally assessed.

- a. Note: These data are obviously flawed as both the cumulative percentage and number of respondents exceeds the totals possible (i.e. 107%, n=14). This may be attributable to an instructor responding in

the affirmative for evaluating both informally and formally.

2. Assessment activities reported for P6 Goal 1 are as follows:

- a. 92% (n=12) report using exams, tests, or quizzes
- b. 92% (n=12) also report using writing assignments
- c. 77% (n=12) report using class discussions or debates
- d. 46% (n=6) report using oral presentations or student lectures
- e. 31% (n=4) report using group activities
- f. 8% (n=1) report using a attendance at a live theater or musical performance
- g. 8% (n=1) report using a creative project
- h. 8% (n=1) report using a attendance at a lecture, reading, or presentation of visiting artist, performer, or writer
- i. No respondents report using service learning, portfolios, personal artistic expressions, or visits to museums or galleries.

ii. P6 Goal 2: Analyze the nature of cultural diversity and global interdependence and the challenges of solving problems and reaching understanding across national and cultural divides.

1. 85% (n=11) of instructors report formally assessing and 23% (n=3) report informally assessing P6 Goal 2
2. Assessment activities reported for P6 Goal 2 are as follows:
  - a. 85% (n=11) report using exams, tests, or quizzes
  - b. 85% (n=11) report using class discussions or debates
  - c. 85% (n=11) report using writing assignments
  - d. 38% (n=5) report using oral presentations or student lectures

- e. 8% (n=1) report using service learning
  - f. 8% (n=1) report using group activities
  - g. 15% (n=2) report using attendance at a theater or musical performance
  - h. 8% (n=1) report using attendance at a lecture, reading, or presentation of visiting artist, performer, or writer
  - i. No respondents indicate using laboratories, creative projects, portfolios, personal artistic expressions, or visits to museums or galleries
- iii. P6 Goal 3: Actively engage in the synthesis of information from a variety of disciplines.
- 1. 54% (n=7) of respondents indicate formally assessing, 54% (n=7) report informally assessing P6 Goal 3. One respondent indicates assessing this goal is not applicable.
    - a. Note: As with survey data from P6 Goal 1 above, data regarding the assessment of P6 Goal 3 likewise suffers from internal validity issues in that the cumulative data exceed 100%. Of course, respondents are likely to have been able to select more than one option to what appears to be a dichotomous response set.
  - 2. Assessment activities reported for P6 Goal 3 are as follows:
    - a. 91% (n=10) report using class discussions or debates
    - b. 64% (n=7) report using exams, tests, or quizzes
    - c. 64% (n=7) report using writing assignments
    - d. 18% (n=2) report using oral presentations or student lectures
    - e. 18% (n=2) report using group activities

- f. 9% (n=1) report using attendance at a theater or musical performance
  - g. 9% (n=1) report using attendance at a lecture, reading, or presentation of visiting artist, performer, or writer
  - h. No respondents indicate using service learning, laboratories, creative projects, portfolios, personal artistic expressions, or visits to museums or galleries
- iv. P6 Goal 4: Understand the responsibility of educated people to be informed about current public issues.
- 1. 54% (n=7) of instructors report formally assessing and 54% (n=7) report informally assessing P6 Goal 4
    - a. Note: Further internal validity issues affect the reporting of data regarding P6 Goal 4 in that the total number of respondent survey answers exceeds the total number of respondents.
  - 2. Assessment activities reported for P6 Goal 4 are as follows:
    - a. 83% (n=10) report using class discussions or debates
    - b. 42% (n=5) report using exams, tests, or quizzes
    - c. 25% (n=3) report using writing assignments
    - d. 17% (n=2) report using oral presentations or student lectures
    - e. 8% (n=1) report using service learning
    - f. 8% (n=1) report using attendance at a theater or musical performance
    - g. 8% (n=1) report using attendance at a lecture, reading, or presentation of visiting artist, performer, or writer
    - h. 2% (n=17) report using group activities



- i. To provide students with a broadened world view and knowledge base.
  1. 92% (n=12) of instructors report formally assessing and 23% (n=3) report informally assessing this learning goal
    - a. Note: Further internal validity issues affect the reporting of data in that the total number of respondent survey answers exceeds the total number of respondents.
  2. Assessment activities reported for this learning goal are as follows:
    - a. 92% (n=12) report using exams, tests, or quizzes
    - b. 85% (n=11) report using class discussions or debates
    - c. 77% (n=10) report using writing assignments
    - d. 38% (n=5) report using oral presentations or student lectures
    - e. 23% (n=3) report using group activities
    - f. 15% (n=2) report using attendance at a theater or musical performance
    - g. 8% (n=1) report using service learning
    - h. 8% (n=1) report using attendance at a lecture, reading, or presentation of visiting artist, performer, or writer
    - i. No respondents indicate using laboratories, creative projects, portfolios, personal artistic expressions, or visits to museums or galleries

g. Learning Goals Assessment – All Perspective Courses:

- i. To provide experience in the arts, humanities, and social sciences, from which connections between disciplines can be revealed

1. 46% (n=6) of instructors report formally assessing and 31% (n=4) report informally assessing this learning goal. 23% (n=3) report that this learning goal is not applicable.
2. Assessment activities reported for this learning goal are as follows:
  - a. 78% (n=7) report using class discussions or debates
  - b. 67% (n=6) report using writing assignments
  - c. 44% (n=4) report using exams, tests, or quizzes
  - d. 22% (n=2) report using oral presentations or student lectures
  - e. 11% (n=1) report using group activities
  - f. 11% (n=1) report using attendance at a theater or musical performance
  - g. 11% (n=1) report using attendance at a lecture, reading, or presentation of visiting artist, performer, or writer
  - h. No respondents indicate using service learning, laboratories, creative projects, portfolios, personal artistic expressions, or visits to museums or galleries

h. Learning Goals Assessment – All Perspective Courses:

- i. To provide an introduction to the challenges of living in a global society.
  1. 62% (n=8) of instructors report formally assessing and 54% (n=7) report informally assessing this learning goal.
    - a. Note: Further internal validity issues affect the reporting of data in that the total number of respondent survey answers exceeds the total number of respondents.
  2. Assessment activities reported for this learning goal are as follows:

- a. 100% (n=12) report using class discussions or debates
  - b. 67% (n=8) report using exams, tests, or quizzes
  - c. 58% (n=7) report using writing assignments
  - d. 25% (n=3) report using oral presentations or student lectures
  - e. 17% (n=2) report using group activities
  - f. 8% (n=1) report using service learning
  - g. 8% (n=1) report using attendance at a theater or musical performance
  - h. 8% (n=1) report using attendance at a lecture, reading, or presentation of visiting artist, performer, or writer
  - i. No respondents indicate using laboratories, creative projects, portfolios, personal artistic expressions, or visits to museums or galleries
- i. Learning Goals Assessment – All Perspective Courses:
- i. To create opportunities for reflections on values, and for discussing differences in values in a critical yet tolerant manner.
    - 1. 54% (n=7) of instructors report formally assessing and 62% (n=8) report informally assessing this learning goal.
      - a. Note: Further internal validity issues affect the reporting of data in that the total number of respondent survey answers exceeds the total number of respondents.
    - 2. Assessment activities reported for this learning goal are as follows:
      - a. 100% (n=13) report using class discussions or debates
      - b. 62% (n=8) report using writing assignments
      - c. 54% (n=7) report using exams, tests, or quizzes

- d. 23% (n=3) report using oral presentations or student lectures
  - e. 23% (n=3) report using group activities
  - f. 8% (n=1) report using service learning
  - g. 8% (n=1) report using attendance at a theater or musical performance
  - h. 8% (n=1) report using attendance at a lecture, reading, or presentation of visiting artist, performer, or writer
  - i. No respondents indicate using laboratories, creative projects, portfolios, personal artistic expressions, or visits to museums or galleries
- j. Learning Goals Assessment – All Perspective Courses:
- i. To afford opportunities to make career or disciplinary choices
    - 1. 23% (n=3) of instructors report formally assessing and 46% (n=6) report informally assessing this learning goal. 31% (n=4) report this learning objective is not applicable
    - 2. Assessment activities reported for this learning goal are as follows:
      - a. 89% (n=8) report using class discussions or debates
      - b. 33% (n=3) report using writing assignments
      - c. 22% (n=2) report using exams, tests, or quizzes
      - d. 22% (n=2) report using oral presentations or student lectures
      - e. 22% (n=2) report using attendance at a lecture, reading, or presentation of visiting artist, performer, or writer
      - f. 11% (n=1) report using attendance at a theater or musical performance
      - g. No respondents indicate using service learning, group activities, laboratories, creative projects,

portfolios, personal artistic expressions, or visits to museums or galleries

k. Learning Goals Assessment – All Perspective Courses:

i. Each Perspectives course is expected to include emphasis on one or more of the following areas: Critical analysis of arguments, oral communication, service learning, moral reflection, cultural diversity, and individual role in a global community or writing skills (coded as “Other” in the faculty survey instrument).

1. Respondents indicate including the following applicable emphases:

- a. 54% (n=7) Critical analysis of arguments
- b. 62% (n=8) oral communication
- c. 8% (n=1) Service learning
- d. 85% (n=11) Moral reflection
- e. 100% (n=13) Cultural diversity
- f. 15% (n=2) Other

General Comments Concerning Syllabi:

Comparing syllabi from courses within this Perspectives category does not give a good indication of whether or not the course is actually meeting the objectives of each category. Many of the syllabi include cut-and-pasted inclusions of statements about the goals of the P6 category, the Liberal Studies program as a whole, or (less commonly) the goals of all Perspectives classes, but in many cases these perfunctory statements seem to have very little to do with the course content. This is a particular concern in terms of the P6 category itself, whose goals – particularly the most crucial goals for this perspective category – are only lightly addressed in a number of courses in this category, if at all.

The category P6 is entitled “World Cultures,” so an outside observer might expect each of the courses to deal with this topic. Indeed, the first two Learning Goals of this category emphasize the global perspective that such courses should present. Learning Goal #1 of this category is that “Students will study significant cultural issues in a *global* and multi-disciplinary setting, which may include the consideration of ethnicity, gender, religion, or race” (Liberal Studies Assessment Form, emphasis added). Learning Goal #2 of this category is that “Students will analyze the nature of cultural diversity and *global* interdependence and the challenges of solving problems and reading understanding across national and cultural divides” (Liberal Studies Assessment Form, emphasis

added). Unfortunately, a number of courses in this category do not present this global perspective. Thus, they should be removed from this category.

In fact, based on a comparison of syllabi given to our committee for consideration, only about half (8/15) exhibited a global perspective. It should be pointed out that three of these syllabi are for different sections of the same course (ANTH 120: Comparative Cultural Systems), that clearly has a global perspective. Thus, in terms of the courses themselves, only one third exhibited a global perspective in this category, which is supposed to be about “World Cultures.” For example, none of the PAR courses included within this category seem to have a truly global perspective. Moreover, the category includes Modern Foreign Language classes that may have cross-cultural content, but do not seem to take the global perspective that would seem to be the hallmark of the category. Thus, the inclusion of cut-and-pasted copies of Liberal Studies objectives in a syllabus has little to do with whether or not the class truly meets the objectives of the category.

#### General Comments Concerning Student Work:

As expected, student work was on par with the expectations created by the instructor. Whatever level of Bloom’s Taxonomy required was what was received. In nearly all cases there were examples of student work that was excellent, average, and poor.

Several of the goals could not be properly evaluated based on the submissions. For instance, one goal is to, “Demonstrate the ability to interpret and use numerical, written, oral and visual data”. Unless the work had citations for all of these modes of data, there wasn’t any way to know if all of the types were interpreted. Another goal was to, “Demonstrate the ability to read with comprehension, and to write and speak clearly, coherently, and effectively as well as to adapt modes of com. appropriate to an audience.” However, only one instructor included video. Consequently, for the other courses there wasn’t any way to assess students’ abilities to speak clearly.

#### Strengths

Based on a review of the syllabi, student work, and surveys, many of these classes are meeting learning objectives of the Liberal Studies program and Perspectives category as a whole. This seems to be instructor dependent. Instructors that required students to utilize higher levels of understanding received work that demonstrated the students’ abilities to analyze, synthesize, and even evaluate. About half of the instructors required these higher levels of thought with regards to some of the 3 sets of goals.

#### Recommendations

Although a review of syllabi, student work, and surveys shows that the courses under consideration are meeting Liberal Studies and Perspectives learning objects, far too many seem to be only paying lip-service to the goals of the P6 category. The following syllabi clearly demonstrated the global perspective that is the basis of this category:

ANTH 120 Comparative Cultural Systems  
ANTH 120 Comparative Cultural Systems  
ANTH 120 Comparative Cultural Systems  
ENGL 209 Literature of World Cultures  
ENGL 366 Literature of American Immigration  
MUS 303 World of Music  
ND 310 Food, Nutrition and Culture  
PSC 110 Global Issues

The following submitted syllabi did not seem to be demonstrating this perspective:

HSCC 205 Women's Health  
LAT 102 Latin Language  
PAR 105 Eastern Religious Traditions  
PAR 202 What is Religion?  
PAR 323 Mysticism and the Modern Mind  
PAR 324 Contemporary Religious Classics  
SPAN 102 Spanish Language

The Liberal Studies committee should consider removing these classes from the category, because they are unlikely to satisfy the learning objectives of the P6 category.

Additionally, the following courses within this category, for which no syllabi were submitted, do not seem to demonstrate a global perspective:

CHER 101 Experiencing Cherokee and the Cherokee-speaking world  
FREN 101, 102, 110 French Language  
GER 101, 102, 110 German Language  
PSC 415 Contemporary British Politics  
PAR 211 Understanding Islamic Traditions  
PAR 220 Women and Religion  
Par 327 Native American Religions  
PAR 325 Religion in Film  
PAR 314 Religion, Suffering, and the Moral Imagination  
SPAN 101, 102, 110 Spanish Language

The Liberal Studies committee should also consider removing these classes from the category, because they are unlikely to satisfy the learning objectives of the P6 category.

In terms of student work, there was some difficulty in reconciling data. Many of the goals need to be split into their individual components. For instance, in the first goal mentioned above in the discussion of student work (Demonstrate the ability to interpret and use numerical, written, oral and visual data), if the student identified 3 of the 4 modes of data, the work still did not meet all of the criteria of the goal and therefore it did not meet the goal. Similarly, in order to assess which components are (not) being met in the

second goal above, (Demonstrate the ability to read with comprehension, and to write and speak clearly, coherently, and effectively as well as to adapt modes of com. appropriate to an audience), the goal should be separated into at least 3 separate goals.

Despite this difficulty in reconciling data, it was clear that much of the student work did not meet the appropriate goals. This seemed to stem from 2 reasons:

1) Roughly half of the assignments were not targeted at meeting *any* of the 3 sets of established goals and as many as 75% of the assignments did not address the P6 specific goals. The committee was split on ways to remedy this problem. One evaluator recommended that first year faculty list the goals for each and every assignment and include the assignment's goals as part of a grading rubric. In addition to helping the instructor focus on the appropriate goals when creating assignments it will also help students focus their efforts appropriately and recognize the goals they are trying to accomplish. Another evaluator thought that requiring the inclusion of goals on each and every assignment would tend to substitute the abstract goals of the Liberal Studies program for the concrete teaching and learning of disciplinary topics. Instead this evaluator recommended the creation of a P6 workshops or focus groups.

2) While all of the courses clearly had merit, about half of them did not seem to fit into the P6 category. If a course is not based on World Cultures, clearly the assignments won't meet the P6 goals. The recommendation here is obvious; the courses either need to be restructured or they simply should be removed from this liberal studies category.

## Faculty Survey Recommendations

### 1. Faculty Survey Respondent Data

- i. No assistant professors are represented in the survey. The committee recommends that efforts be made to encourage junior tenure track faculty to engage these courses. Other things being equal, the committee suggests that newly and recently hired junior faculty represent the avant-garde of each discipline by virtue of their relatively fresh education.

### 2. P6 World Cultures Learning Assessment Goals

- i. No respondents indicate incorporating service learning opportunities when assessing P6 Goal 1. The committee recommends that serious consideration be given to promoting service-learning opportunities for students. It seems clear that many organizations exist in the general

Western Carolina University regional area that could provide opportunities for students to learn from persons of color, religious organizations, gender-related organizations, and so on. The committee recommends that P6 instructors be encouraged to coordinate these activities with WCU service learning staff.

- ii. Further explication of precisely what P6 Goal 3 is, both conceptually and operationally. In short, the committee recommends including language that is more concrete in nature.
  - iii. No respondents indicate using laboratories, creative projects, portfolios, or personal artistic expressions when assessing ANY P6 Goals. The committee recommends that these activities/assignments be reviewed for appropriateness to P6 World Culture goals and decisions be made as to whether they should be kept or special attention given to promoting their use in P6 courses.
- b. Learning Goals Assessment – all Perspectives Courses
- i. As with P6 Goal 3, the first Learning Goal for all Perspective courses suffers from overly abstract explication. In short, the committee recommends including language that is more concrete in nature.
  - ii. Learning goals for all Perspective courses are not numbered on the. Summary Frequencies for Liberal StudiesP6 – World Cultures FACULTY (sic) Survey provided to the committee. Numbering these goals would greatly enhance overall liberal studies program management as well as individual program assessment.
  - iii. No respondents indicate using laboratories, creative projects, portfolios, personal artistic expressions when assessing ANY P6 learning goals for all Perspectives

courses. Again, the committee recommends that these activities/assignments be reviewed for appropriateness to P6 learning goals for all Perspectives courses and decisions be made as to whether they should be kept or special attention given to promoting their use in P6 courses.

c. General

- i. Internal validity issues abound with the Faculty Survey instrument. For example, cumulative data regularly exceed the total number of respondents in faculty survey questions (see notes above). Data appear to be reported as dichotomous when very obviously the instrument allowed respondents to select multiple responses. In order to improve the quality of data in future reports, the committee recommends strongly that this instrument be reviewed for accuracy and revised accordingly. Simple Chronbach's Alpha testing should provide valuable insight into the reliability of the instrument as well.